



## News Release

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### **Gold Medal Schools™ Grows Up**

#### *UDOH Student Health Program Expands into Junior High, Middle and Intermediate Schools*

(Salt Lake City, UT) – After seven years, more than 300 Utah elementary schools proudly call themselves Gold Medal Schools (GMS). Now, Utah students ages 12-15 will get the chance to take on a new health culture as well, as three of their own—Mountain Ridge Junior High of Alpine School District, Riverview Junior High in the Murray School District, and Bountiful Junior High in the Davis School District—pilot a GMS-inspired program that caters to adolescents.

Gold Medal Schools Power-Up creates opportunities for students to *eat smart, move smart and be smart*. The program will help schools play an active role in student health by creating policies to change their environment. Gold Medal Schools began as a Utah Department of Health (UDOH) elementary school program in 2000. Building on its success, Gold Medal Schools Power-Up will create one-mile walking courses and promote nutrition standards and tobacco-free policies at middle, intermediate and junior high schools.

Like the elementary program, participating schools can pursue award levels of Bronze, Silver, and Gold, and earn cash to be used to further enhance health and nutrition. The big *difference* with Power-Up, however, is it gets students involved in designing and promoting the program within the school.

“With overweight and obesity on the rise among children and adolescents, we’re anxious to bring GMS to tens of thousands more Utah students,” said Sarah Rigby, GMS Coordinator for the UDOH. “We knew that to be successful the program would need to be adapted, but the goal of creating a tradition of health is still the same.”

Mountain Ridge Junior High Principal, Paula Fugal, is excited to be among the first to implement GMS Power-Up in the state. “We realized a few years ago we had way too

many foods in our vending machines that had zero nutritional value,” said Fugal. “So we opted not to have vending machines—period. “Now with Power-Up, we’re also looking at the a la carte items in the lunch line to see how we can get healthier foods in there as well.”

Fugal admits cutting the vending machines required a huge commitment. “The financial loss is staggering,” she said, “but in good conscience we decided it was irresponsible and hypocritical for us to teach healthy lifestyle and food choices in the classroom while selling junk food in the hallways.”

Fugal tells those who say limiting food choices clashes with teaching children personal responsibility that, because lifelong habits are being formed at this time, it’s the school’s responsibility to guide and inform students about all aspects of nutrition.

To create a healthy environment for students and teachers Mountain Ridge plans to:

- Offer cooking classes during staff in-service meetings to provide cooking tips and hints on how to create delicious, healthy meals.
- Offer strength training in-service on how to use onsite weight training room.
- Offer school and community-wide activities like hosting an annual school 5K, Lunchtime Walking Clubs, and Gold Medal Mile Walks.
- Offer more healthy food choices at vending machines and in the a la carte lunch line.

Since 2000, the Gold Medal Schools program has positively impacted thousands of Utah teachers, students, and parents by offering more opportunities for eating healthy, being active, and staying tobacco-free.

For more information visit <http://health.utah.gov/hearhighway/gms/>.

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*The mission of the Utah Department of Health is to protect the public's health through preventing avoidable illness, injury, disability and premature death, assuring access to affordable, quality health care, and promoting healthy lifestyles.*